TheKey to

Family Health History Checklist

Knowing your family's past can help you prepare for your future.

Your family's health story is part of your own. The conditions your parents, grandparents and siblings have lived with can offer useful clues about your own health, and about the conversations worth having with your healthcare provider.

Family health history matters because families share more than genes. Relatives often share the places they live, the foods they eat, their daily routines and their habits. Together, genetics, environment and lifestyle shape health over a lifetime. Knowing what runs in your family can help your provider decide which screenings make sense for you, and when to start them.

Family history is information, not a prediction. Having a relative with a condition does not mean you will develop it, and having no family history does not mean you won't. What it can do is help you and your provider plan ahead, so you can focus on prevention, catch changes early and make choices that support healthy aging and independence.

It is never too late to start. Whether you are 30 or 80, collecting this information is a gift to yourself and to the generations that follow.

How to use this checklist

1. Start with the relatives you can reach most easily. You do not need to finish in one sitting.
2. Write down what you know, even if it is incomplete. Mark anything you are unsure about so you can confirm it later.
3. Use one Family Member Health Record (page 7) for each relative. Make as many copies as you need.
4. Bring the completed checklist to your next healthcare appointment, and update it whenever you learn something new.

You do not need to have all the answers. Every piece of information you gather, even a single detail, can be helpful.

SECTION 1

Who Should You Talk To?

Your closest biological relatives usually offer the most useful information. Check each person once you have talked with them or gathered what you can about their health.

	Relative	Notes (name, who to contact, what you learned)
☐	**Mother** Closest relative	
☐	**Father** Closest relative	
☐	**Brothers and sisters** Closest relative	
☐	**Children** Closest relative	
☐	**Maternal grandparents** Your mother's parents	
☐	**Paternal grandparents** Your father's parents	
☐	**Aunts and uncles** On both sides of the family	
☐	**Half-brothers and half-sisters** Share one parent with you	
☐	**Other biological relatives** Cousins, nieces, nephews, great-grandparents	

If your family history is limited or unknown

- Many people do not have access to their biological family history, including people who were adopted, conceived with donor eggs or sperm, or separated from family members. That is common, and you can still take helpful steps.
- If you were adopted or conceived with donor help, the adoption or donor agency may have some health records available. Older relatives on either side may also know more than you expect.
- If you are estranged from relatives or they have passed away, other family members, medical records or family documents may fill in some gaps.
- Tell your healthcare provider that your family history is limited. They can recommend screenings based on your age and personal health, and can say whether genetic testing might be useful for you.
- Your own health history matters too. Keep a record of your own diagnoses, screenings and test results to share with your children.

SECTION 2

What Health Conditions Run in Your Family?

Check any condition that a biological relative has had. Note who had it, and mark whether it was confirmed by a doctor, suspected or unknown. Age at diagnosis is especially helpful to record on the Family Member Health Record.

[C] Confirmed: diagnosed by a doctor [S] Suspected: not confirmed [?] Unknown: not sure

Condition	Who had it? (relationship, age at diagnosis)	C	S	?
Brain and neurological health				
☐ Alzheimer's disease		☐	☐	☐
☐ Other forms of dementia		☐	☐	☐
☐ Mild cognitive impairment		☐	☐	☐
☐ Parkinson's disease		☐	☐	☐
☐ Stroke		☐	☐	☐
☐ Other neurological conditions		☐	☐	☐
Heart and cardiovascular health				
☐ Heart disease		☐	☐	☐
☐ Heart attack		☐	☐	☐
☐ High blood pressure		☐	☐	☐
☐ High cholesterol		☐	☐	☐
☐ Heart failure		☐	☐	☐
☐ Atrial fibrillation (AFib)		☐	☐	☐
Metabolic and endocrine health				
☐ Type 1 diabetes		☐	☐	☐
☐ Type 2 diabetes		☐	☐	☐
☐ Thyroid disorders		☐	☐	☐
☐ Obesity		☐	☐	☐

Condition	Who had it? (relationship, age at diagnosis)	C	S	?
Cancer				
☐ Breast cancer		☐	☐	☐
☐ Colorectal cancer		☐	☐	☐
☐ Prostate cancer		☐	☐	☐
☐ Lung cancer		☐	☐	☐
☐ Ovarian cancer		☐	☐	☐
☐ Pancreatic cancer		☐	☐	☐
☐ Other cancers		☐	☐	☐
Bone, joint and mobility health				
☐ Osteoporosis		☐	☐	☐
☐ Arthritis		☐	☐	☐
☐ Hip fractures		☐	☐	☐
☐ Recurrent falls		☐	☐	☐
☐ Significant mobility difficulties		☐	☐	☐
Mental and behavioral health				
☐ Depression		☐	☐	☐
☐ Anxiety disorders		☐	☐	☐
☐ Bipolar disorder		☐	☐	☐
☐ Substance use disorders		☐	☐	☐

Condition	Who had it? (relationship, age at diagnosis)	C	S	?

Other health conditions

	Condition	Who had it? (relationship, age at diagnosis)	C	S	?
☐	Hearing loss		☐	☐	☐
☐	Vision loss		☐	☐	☐
☐	Kidney disease		☐	☐	☐
☐	Chronic lung disease (such as COPD)		☐	☐	☐
☐	Autoimmune disorders		☐	☐	☐
☐	Known inherited or genetic conditions		☐	☐	☐

Other conditions in your family

☐ _____

☐ _____

☐ _____

☐ _____

☐ _____

☐ _____

SECTION 3

Questions to Ask Your Family

Choose the questions that feel right and let the conversation unfold naturally. Holidays, birthdays and family visits can be good moments to begin.

General medical history

- What medical conditions have you been diagnosed with?
- How old were you when you were diagnosed?
- Have you had any major surgeries or hospital stays?

Brain health and memory

- Has anyone in our family had memory loss, Alzheimer's disease or another form of dementia?
- Has anyone in our family developed dementia before age 65?
- Has anyone had a stroke or Parkinson's disease? How old were they?

Heart health

- Has anyone in our family had a heart attack, heart disease, high blood pressure or high cholesterol?
- Did anyone have heart problems at a younger age, such as 50 or younger?

Cancer history

- Has anyone in our family had cancer? What kind, and how old were they?
- Has anyone experienced cancer at an unusually young age?
- Has anyone had genetic testing, and would they be willing to share the results?

Mobility and independence

- At what age did our relatives begin needing help with everyday activities?
- Has anyone broken a hip or had osteoporosis?
- Did anyone have frequent falls or trouble getting around?

Family longevity

- Who in our family lived the longest? What was their life like as they got older?
- How old were our grandparents and great-grandparents when they passed away, and what was the cause?
- Were there relatives who stayed sharp and active well into their later years?

Lifestyle and daily habits

- What habits helped our relatives remain healthy and independent?
- How did our family eat, stay active and spend time together when you were growing up?
- Did anyone in our family smoke, or live or work around things that might affect health?
- What do you wish you had known about your health when you were younger?

Approaching sensitive conversations

- Explain why you are asking. Many people are glad to help when they know the goal is to support everyone's health.
- Choose a calm, private moment rather than the middle of a busy gathering.
- Respect that some topics are painful, and that some relatives may prefer not to share. It is okay to stop and return to it later.
- Ask before writing information down or sharing it with other relatives.

SECTION 4

Family Member Health Record

Complete one record for each relative and make copies as needed. Write “unknown” when you are not sure.

Name (optional)

Relationship to you

Side of the family

☐ Mother’s side ☐ Father’s side ☐ Both / not applicable

Current age, or age at death

Cause of death, if applicable

Ethnic or ancestral background

Diagnosed medical conditions and age at diagnosis

Major surgeries or hospitalizations

Known genetic conditions or genetic testing results

Relevant lifestyle and environmental factors (for example, smoking, physical activity, diet, work exposures)

Additional notes

Information that still needs to be confirmed

SECTION 5

Recognizing Patterns in Your Family

Once you have gathered some information, look for patterns. Check any that apply and bring them up with your healthcare provider.

- [ ] Several relatives with the same condition
- [ ] Conditions diagnosed at unusually young ages
- [ ] Dementia across more than one generation
- [ ] Heart disease at an early age (for example, at 50 or younger)
- [ ] Several relatives on the same side of the family with the same or related cancers
- [ ] Breast, uterine or colorectal cancer before age 50, ovarian cancer in a female relative, or breast cancer in a male relative
- [ ] A known inherited or genetic condition in the family
- [ ] Repeated hip fractures or osteoporosis
- [ ] Unexplained or sudden deaths at a young age
- [ ] Relatives who lived exceptionally long, healthy lives

Remember

These patterns are not diagnoses, and they do not predict what will happen to you. They are signals that a conversation with your healthcare provider may be worthwhile. Your provider can help you understand what the pattern means for you, if anything.

What I noticed

SECTION 6

Your Family's Healthy Aging Story

Family history is not only about illness. It also holds stories of strength, resilience and long, meaningful lives. The habits and routines that helped your relatives thrive can be a source of inspiration for your own healthy aging.

LONGEVITY Who in our family lived into their 80s, 90s or beyond? What do you remember about how they lived?

MOVEMENT How did they stay active? Walking, gardening, dancing, working with their hands?

NUTRITION What did they like to eat? Were there family meals or traditions around food?

SLEEP What were their sleep habits and daily rhythms like?

SOCIAL CONNECTION Who were the important people in their lives? How did they stay connected to friends and community?

COGNITIVE ENGAGEMENT What kept their minds busy? Reading, puzzles, music, learning new things?

MANAGING STRESS How did they cope with hard times?

INDEPENDENCE What helped them stay independent at home for as long as they did?

PURPOSE What routines, roles or causes gave their days meaning?

At TheKey Home Care, our Balanced Care Method® draws on many of these same everyday foundations, including nutrition, sleep, movement, cognitive engagement, social connection and a sense of purpose. Healthy habits cannot guarantee that a person will avoid illness, but research suggests they can support overall health as we age.

SECTION 7

Preparing for Your Next Healthcare Appointment

Before your visit

- [ ] Bring this checklist and any completed Family Member Health Records.
- [ ] Note the patterns you checked in Section 5.
- [ ] Bring a list of your own medications and past screenings.
- [ ] Write down your top questions before the visit.

Questions to ask your healthcare provider

- [ ] Does my family history change which health screenings I should receive?
- [ ] Should I begin certain screenings earlier or have them more often?
- [ ] Would genetic counseling be appropriate for me?
- [ ] Are there lifestyle changes that may help address my individual risk factors?
- [ ] What should I know about my family's history of dementia or neurological disease?
- [ ] Are there health conditions I should monitor more closely as I age?
- [ ] How often should I update my family health history?

My other questions

Recommendations from my provider

Next steps

SECTION 8

My Personal Action Plan

Family members I still need to speak with

Information I need to confirm

Questions for my healthcare provider

Appointments or screenings to discuss

Healthy habits I want to prioritize

Date this checklist was last updated _____

Family health history changes over time. Revisit this checklist at least once a year, and whenever a relative receives a new diagnosis or you learn something new.

Resources and References

The information in this checklist was reviewed against the following public health and medical resources. Some offer free tools for recording your family health history.

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. About Family Health History. https://www.cdc.gov/family-health-history/about/index.html
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Family Health History and Adults. https://www.cdc.gov/family-health-history/family-health-history-and-you/family-health-history-and-adults.html
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Family Health History Tools and Resources. https://www.cdc.gov/family-health-history/resources/index.html
4. U.S. Surgeon General and National Human Genome Research Institute. My Family Health Portrait (free online tool). https://cbiit.github.io/FHH/html/index.html
5. MedlinePlus Genetics, National Library of Medicine. Why is it important to know my family health history? https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/understanding/inheritance/familyhistory/
6. MedlinePlus Magazine, National Library of Medicine. Do you know your family health history? https://magazine.medlineplus.gov/article/do-you-know-your-family-health-history
7. National Human Genome Research Institute. Family Health History for Patients and Families. https://www.genome.gov/Health/Family-Health-History/Patients-Families
8. National Institute on Aging. Alzheimer's Disease Genetics Fact Sheet. https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/alzheimers-causes-and-risk-factors/alzheimers-disease-genetics-fact-sheet
9. National Institute on Aging. Cognitive Health and Older Adults. https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/brain-health/cognitive-health-and-older-adults
10. National Institute on Aging. What Do We Know About Healthy Aging? https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/healthy-aging/what-do-we-know-about-healthy-aging
11. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. About Heart Disease, Family Health History, and Familial Hypercholesterolemia. https://www.cdc.gov/heart-disease-family-history/about/index.html
12. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Family Health History and Cancer. https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/risk-factors/family-health-history.html
13. MedlinePlus Genetics, National Library of Medicine. What is a genetic consultation? https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/understanding/consult/consultation/
14. MedlinePlus Genetics, National Library of Medicine. Why might someone have a genetic consultation? https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/understanding/consult/reasons/
15. National Human Genome Research Institute. Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act (GINA). https://www.genome.gov/genetics-glossary/Genetic-Information-Nondiscrimination-Act-GINA

Keeping your information private

Your completed checklist contains personal health information about you and your relatives. Store it somewhere secure, and share it only with family members who have agreed to share and with your healthcare providers. Ask permission before passing along a relative's health details.

About this resource

This checklist is for educational purposes only. It is not medical advice and does not replace a conversation with a qualified healthcare provider. Family health history cannot predict whether you will develop a condition. Talk with your doctor or another healthcare professional about your personal health, screenings and any questions you have.

Your family's health story is part of your own.